

have now sent in letters, but I can safely say there is not a veterans organization in the country that would oppose this legislation. I could travel to any State, any center, and I could go to a homeless shelter. I used to organize with homeless people, visit with homeless veterans, many Vietnam veterans. This legislation provides some support services for them—job training, counseling for veterans struggling with addiction, other social service programs.

There is a Senator who has put a hold on it, and I cannot find out who he or she is. These anonymous holds drive me up the wall. I have never put an anonymous hold on a bill—never. I am putting a hold on just about every single piece of legislation that any Senator on the other side of the aisle wants to put through here until this piece of legislation goes through. I have come out here twice or three times. I can't find out who objects to it. I would love to debate a Senator about why he or she opposes this homeless veterans bill.

So I am going to come to the Chamber every day, every single day, and I am going to ask unanimous consent to pass this bill. I hope that whoever opposes it will tell me why. In the meantime, I am putting a hold on just about every single piece of unanimous consent legislation that is proposed from the other side of the aisle, which I hardly ever do.

This is a great way to proceed in a bipartisan manner, to have some Senator, who has apparently very little courage, put an anonymous hold on a bill which provides more homeless assistance to veterans, who will not come out here to debate it, and basically stops it dead in its tracks. I have been around here 11 years. The only thing I can figure out is I just put a hold on pretty much everything that comes from the other side of the aisle. I will review them one by one, but I will not do it anonymously.

Let me say to my colleagues, many of whom I enjoy and like and rarely am angry with even if I disagree, I am sorry. I apologize. But I am putting a hold on just about every single piece of legislation that comes through here from the other side.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CANTWELL). The clerk will call the roll. The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THOMAS. I ask that I may speak up to 10 minutes in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATE PRIORITIES

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I rise to reflect a little bit on the issues

we have before us and the idea that we have some things to do that are priorities. I think most of us would agree to a certain set of priorities, and that we ought to be dealing with those priorities and moving forward with what we have to do. We have known this for quite a long time, as a matter of fact.

I am sure the folks on the other side of the aisle will get up and say the Republicans are blocking everything; that is not true. We need to put a priority on what we are seeking to do and get those jobs done.

We have three more appropriations, I think, out of the 13 with which to deal. We ought to be doing that and we are working on one now.

Conference reports, which will be coming back—handle those.

Certainly, I think everyone is committed to the idea of doing an economic stimulus package. I understand there are different points of view, and it is understandable because I don't think anybody knows precisely what it is that will have the most and quickest impact on the economy. Nevertheless, we need to do that; we need to do some things that are short term that have an impact. Most of us understand that.

We need to finish up airport security. That has to be done, of course, before we go.

Somewhere along the line, of course, bioterrorism is something that needs to be done.

We had hoped as part of the stimulus package or related to it we could get a date or do something with energy. If there is anything that impacts the economy, certainly it is an energy policy. An energy policy also, of course, is becoming vital to what we are seeking to do in the Middle East.

The idea that here we are in kind of a shutdown, when we are kind of in a press to get things done, and it seems like an opportunity to stick on everything that everybody has ever wanted to do is not a very good way to manage this place. It is not a very good way for us to set the priorities that this country needs, which is our job, and then to get on with doing it.

I have to say it gets a little discouraging sometimes for us to be going along with all this to do and somehow we can't seem to get with it. We have not even voted in the last 2 days in a rollover vote.

I know it is a difficult thing to do. I am not critical of anyone particularly. But I think collectively we ought to come to the snubbing post and say we have these things to do and here is what we have to do to them and put aside some things that have been hanging around forever and put them on something that is going in, which is always the impact and effect of coming down to the end.

I have to share a certain amount of frustration with what is happening. We are not going to agree on every issue. To not understand that is naive. But we could agree on saying we have to get this job done. Some have to give up

this or have to give up that, but we have to do it.

I feel very strongly about the energy issue. I have been part of the group that has worked on that for a very long time. I do believe it has, indeed, always been important to have a policy, to do something more about domestic production. But it is even more important now, and clearly so.

I can't think of anything, as a matter of fact, that probably has more impact on the economy than the availability and cost of oil and we produce that oil and the cost of production.

These are the kinds of things we can do. So I am hopeful that as we work towards adjournment time, which can't be too far off, we will set a list of priorities. We should say: These are the things we need to do. Here are our priorities. Let's do them. Let's get on with it.

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. SESSIONS addressed the Chair. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator withhold?

Mr. THOMAS. Yes. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2002—Continued

AMENDMENTS NOS. 2042, 2045, AND 2054,
WITHDRAWN

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I have offered three amendments today: Amendment No. 2042, a wage index adjustment amendment; amendment No. 2045, calling for a study on AIDS prevention program funding; and amendment No. 2054, an amendment dealing with a study on student loans, with the goal of reducing fraud and abuse in student loan programs.

Having worked with the leadership and the floor managers on these amendments, I withdraw all three amendments at this time, with the understanding that amendments Nos. 2045 and 2054, with modifications, would be made part of the managers' amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have spoken with the managers of the bill, and what the Senator from Alabama has said is correct. If, for some reason, the managers cannot agree to these amendments—and they have indicated they would—the Senator would have a right to reoffer these amendments.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank Senator REID for his courtesy, as always.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The three amendments are withdrawn.

Mr. REED. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ENERGY POLICY

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I would just like to share a few remarks at this time concerning the energy bill. We need to improve our production of energy within the United States, and I would like to share a few thoughts about why I think it is a critical part of stimulating the economy.

At this time of economic slowdown, we need to create circumstances that will allow the economy to grow and flower. It has struck me for some time—and I have mentioned this on the floor previously—that our economic slowdown began over a year ago, and it began not long after we saw a tremendous surge in the price of energy. The price of a barrel of oil in the United States was as low as \$13 a barrel. It soon leaped to \$30 a barrel. And 60 percent of all the oil we utilize in the United States is purchased abroad.

So there was a tremendous transfer of American wealth. We got no more oil—not a single barrel of oil—but we were paying more than twice as much for that oil as we were paying just months before it surged upward.

That drained a great deal of money from this economy. It demonstrated, with great clarity, the dependence we have on foreign oil. And most of the reserves of foreign oil are in the Middle East. It has pointed out the dangers we face if we do not make some changes.

Now we are engaged in hostilities in the Middle East, and we see, once again, just how fragile that supply of oil is to our Nation, and how quickly it can be interrupted.

Our economy needs to improve. I think it is incumbent on us to consider, quite seriously, reforming our energy laws so that we can produce more energy in this country. If we can do that, we will be able to keep more money at home. So when a well is drilled, the question is, Will it be drilled in Saudi Arabia or Iran or Iraq or Kuwait, or will it be drilled somewhere in the United States? When it is drilled here, not only does the money stay here—the royalties that are paid to the State or the landowner for the oil—but all the people who drill the well, all the people who work at it, process the oil, and move that oil from the wellhead site—all of those people will be paid salaries; and then they will pay taxes. They will help reduce our unemployment, increase tax revenue, and provide income for American workers.

So we need to do a number of things to improve our energy situation so that we reduce the drain on our economy from the constant purchase of oil abroad.

Conservation is a critical part of that. The more we can reduce the use

of oil and gas in America, then the less demand we have to transfer wealth abroad to purchase it. At the same time, the more we can produce in the United States, the greater our chance will be to churn that money again within the United States, creating jobs, salaries, retirements, and health care benefits, as well as taxes for our States and our governments, our local school systems, and the Federal Government. It will strengthen our economy in a number of ways.

I think improving our energy production would be a critical step in revitalizing our economy. I do not think it is coincidental that we began to sink not long after we saw a tripling of the price of oil on the world market.

I am delighted to see the ranking member of the Energy Committee, Senator MURKOWSKI, in this Chamber. I know he wants to speak on this issue. He has been a constant, steady advocate for America: What is good for American workers, what is good for this country, what we need to do to remain economically strong.

If we do not remain economically strong, we cannot do the good things in this country, and around the world, we want to do.

He has been a great champion of that. As I said, I see he is in this Chamber. I suspect he would like to talk on the energy issue in more detail.

I thank him for his leadership and yield the floor to him.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, let me acknowledge the comments of my good friend. He and I have shared stands on many issues; and one that I think is prominent at this time, as indicated, is on the issue relative to the request by our President that we have and pass an energy policy, and that we do it with dispatch.

Our President has spoken out four times in the last 2 weeks, indicating the general observation that, indeed, we need an energy bill.

Quoting from a late October release, the statement is made that:

Tax relief is only part of the job. We need an energy plan for America. Under the leadership of the Vice President, we have drafted a comprehensive, common sense plan for the future of our country.

It further states that:

It has passed the House of Representatives in H.R. 4. It needs a vote in the U.S. Senate. We need to be more self-reliant and more self-sufficient.

On October 17, he indicated:

I ask Congress to now act on an energy bill. The House of Representatives passed its bill in August. This is an issue of special importance to California, the State of Washington [which the Presiding Officer represents]. Too much of our energy comes from the Mideast. The plan I sent up to Congress promotes conservation, expands energy supplies, and improves the efficiency of our energy network. Our country needs greater energy independence.

On October 4:

There are two other aspects to a good, strong economic stimulus.

I note that the President uses the words "economic stimulus."

One is trade promotion authority, and the other is an energy bill. I urge the Senate to listen to the will of the Senators and move forward on a bill that will help Americans find work and also make it easier for all of us around the table to protect the security of the country.

We have spent a lot of time talking about homeland security. An integral piece of homeland security is energy independence. I ask the Senate to respond to the call to get an energy bill moving."

The President made another comment to a group today asking again that this body move on an energy bill. It would be derelict if we are to conclude this session without addressing an energy bill.

We are not alone. I have letters here from the American Legion, Vietnam Veterans Institute, Veterans of Foreign Wars, AMVETS, Gold Star Wives of America, Catholic War Veterans, Survivors of Pearl Harbor, all who participated in a press conference yesterday here in Washington.

I ask unanimous consent that the following letters be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letters were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, October 25, 2001.

Hon. TOM DASCHLE,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
The Capitol, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR DASCHLE: We write today out of a sense of urgency concerning our national security, as it relates to our need for energy independence. The development of America's domestic energy resources is vital to our national security. We respectfully urge you to adopt the provisions contained in H.R. 4, the "Securing America's Future Energy Act of 2001."

War and international terrorism have again brought into sharp focus the heavy reliance of the United States on imported oil. During times of crises, such reliance threatens our national security and economic well being. The import of more than 50 percent of our petroleum from the Persian Gulf further compounds our foreign trade balance at a time when our energy demands continue unabated. It is important that we develop domestic sources of oil, contained within our public lands—such as the supplies within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Working for a comprehensive energy policy and achieving responsible energy independence are critical national security and economic goals. H.R. 4, as passed by the House of Representatives, is a major step forward to achieving these imperative goals. We strongly urge your support.

Sincerely,

RICHARD J. SANTOS,
National Commander.

VIETNAM VETERANS INSTITUTE,
October 30, 2001.

Hon. TOM DASCHLE,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
The Capitol, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR DASCHLE: We write today out of a sense of urgency concerning our national security as it relates to our energy supply. The development of America's domestic energy resources is vital to our national security. We respectfully urge you to